



May 31, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Frank Kendall  
Secretary of the Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary Austin and Secretary Kendall,

On behalf of Colorado's higher education institutions, we are writing to convey our collective support for keeping U.S. Space Command headquarters (USSPACECOM HQ) at Peterson Space Force Base (SFB) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We understand the final decision remains under review, but we believe Colorado is the best possible location for USSPACECOM HQ. Additionally, we want to highlight our commitment to supporting the Department of Defense (DoD) and the U.S. Air Force's work in Colorado and in space.

Colorado is proud to be home to the nation's key leading federal scientific laboratories and military installations. This robust federal presence in our state is attributed in large part to Colorado's dynamic higher education system, which supports our nation's civil and national security space enterprise and has paved the way for exponential growth in the commercial space industry. From training the state's top-rated aerospace workforce and conducting world-class space research across multiple strategic disciplines, to our commitment to serving our active-duty military personnel, veterans and their families, our institutions are the heart of Colorado's rich aerospace ecosystem. The numerous military space installations and operations across the state, including USSPACECOM at Peterson SFB, play an integral role in this ecosystem and are supported by effective collaborations with Colorado's thriving academic, governmental and commercial sectors in support of our civil and national security enterprise.

Given the ever-evolving nature of space and the critical role space-based assets play in our daily lives, it is vital to have a workforce equipped with up-to-the-minute tools and skills to address the challenges of the day and prepare for those of tomorrow. Our institutions are leading the way in training this workforce. From cybersecurity, aerospace engineering, machine learning, computer science, etc., our students learn from some of the top experts in their respective fields. Through experiential learning and internship opportunities with many of the nation's leading aerospace companies (also headquartered here in Colorado), our students often have job offers prior to completing their academic programs. The Colorado Space Grant Consortium (COSGC) is a prime example of the power of partnerships across the state. With more 21 colleges and universities partners, COSGC provides students access to space through innovative courses, real-world hands-on telescope and satellite programs, and interactive outreach programs. Furthermore, our institutions continue to adapt to meet

students where they are. We do this through shared inter-institutional agreements across the Front Range, the Eastern Plains and the Western Slope, and by providing flexible, hybrid courses designed for individuals currently in the workforce and those who are returning to colleges and universities to gain advanced technical skills and additional credentials. Our work includes serving rural, urban and underrepresented communities to provide equitable access to postsecondary education to ensure our state's dynamic aerospace workforce reflects our state's diverse population.

Our institutions are at the forefront of the nation's leading space research, including studying and advancing the knowledge of our Earth Systems as well as investigating Low-Earth Orbit and beyond. With more than 30 federal research laboratories in Colorado, our colleges and universities work closely with our federal partners to advance the knowledge and technical capabilities to help tackle many of our most urgent issues. Given the strong NASA footprint in the state (e.g. the University of Colorado Boulder is the #1 public university in the country for NASA research awards), our collective research is supporting civil and commercial partners alike, helping enable new technologies and grow the state's aerospace economy. The space-centered research also plays a critical role in supporting our national security partners, including the DoD – specifically the Air Force, Space Force, Army and even USSPACECOM – as a unified combatant command. Addressing areas of strategic importance, including space domain awareness, unmanned aircraft systems, propulsion, remote sensing and cybersecurity, etc., allows our faculty researchers to assist efforts at the Pentagon and on the front lines to keep us safe and protect our way of life.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our institutions take great pride in our longstanding commitment to serving our active-duty military, veterans and their families. Our institutions are home to a strong network of Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) that prepare and train many of the nation's future commissioned officers from all the branches of Armed Services, including the Air Force and Space Force. Our numerous veteran support services help our military-affiliated students navigate life on campus and assist them in utilizing their hard-earned benefits to attain their educational and professional goals. We believe it is one of our highest honors – and responsibilities – to serve those who serve our nation by providing robust and diverse educational opportunities and support services to active-duty military, discharged personnel and their families. This responsibility extends to civilian personnel who work tirelessly to ensure our military installations operate smoothly and efficiently.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our collective support for maintaining USSPACECOM HQ at Peterson SFB in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with DoD and the Air Force, and would welcome an opportunity to host you at one of our institutions during a future visit to the Centennial State.

Sincerely,

Angie Paccione, Executive Director, *Colorado Department of Higher Education*  
Todd Saliman, President, *University of Colorado System*  
Phil Distefano, Chancellor, *University of Colorado Boulder*  
Venkat Reddy, Chancellor, *University of Colorado Colorado Springs*  
Michelle Marks, Chancellor, *University of Colorado Denver*  
Don Elliman, Chancellor, *University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus*  
Tony Frank, Chancellor, *Colorado State University System*  
Joyce McConnell, President, *Colorado State University*  
Timothy Mottet, President, *Colorado State University Pueblo*

Pamela Toney, President, *Colorado State University Global*  
Paul Johnson, President, *Colorado School of Mines*  
Andy Feinstein, President, *University of Northern Colorado*  
Charles G. Lief, President, *Naropa University*  
Jeremy Haefner, Chancellor, *University of Denver*  
Janine Davidson, President, *Metropolitan State University of Denver*  
Nancy Chisholm, Interim President, *Western Colorado University*  
John Marshall, President, *Colorado Mesa University*  
Tom Stritikus, President, *Fort Lewis College*  
L. Song Richardson, President, *Colorado College*  
Cheryl D. Lovell, President, *Adams State University*  
Carrie Besnette Hauser, President & CEO, *Colorado Mountain College*  
Joe Garcia, Chancellor, *Colorado Community College System*  
Michele Haney, President, *Red Rocks Community College*  
Patty Erjavec, President, *Pueblo Community College*  
Andrew R. Dorsey, President, *Front Range Community College*  
Curt Freed, President, *Morgan Community College*  
Leah L. Bornstein, President, *Aims Community College*  
Marielena DeSanctis, President, *Community College of Denver*  
Stephanie J. Fujii, President, *Arapahoe Community College*  
Mordecai Ian Brownlee, President, *Community College of Aurora*  
Linda Lujan, President, *Lamar Community College*  
Lisa Jones, President, *Colorado Northwestern Community College*  
Mike White, President, *Northeastern Junior College*  
Timothy A. Alvarez, President, *Otero Junior College*  
Rhonda Epper, President, *Trinidad State College*  
Pambos Polycarpou, President, *Spring International Language Center*